Solutions

Success Strategies for Users of Creative Solutions Software

WHY IS THIS WOMAN SMILING?

Pam Darling
Bailin, Lavorato & Darling, Inc.
Salinas, California

THOMSON
CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

Solutions

In This Issue

COVER: Pam Darling of Bailin, Lavorato & Darling, Inc., outside historic Steinbeck House, Salinas, California—the famous author's birthplace and one of the firm's clients using Client Bookkeeping Solution (Photo by Peter Patau.)

25 Years — No Time for Resting on Our Laurels

In ancient times, laurel leaves or twigs were formed into a wreath and conferred as a mark of honor upon poets, heroes, and victors in athletic competitions.

In this Olympic year, many of us daydream about what it would be like to compete at the Olympic level and how it would feel to win an Olympic medal. If we're wise, we look for opportunities to achieve those levels of success in our own endeavors.

This year, Creative Solutions has another reason for reflection—our 25th anniversary of developing software and services for practicing tax and accounting professionals. Our company, founded in 1979 by Larry Beach, has grown significantly—in the number of products developed, firms served, and staff members employed. This growth has helped us better fulfill our mission of improving the services, productivity, and profitability of professional tax and accounting firms.

To accomplish this, we've made it our strategy to take advantage of the latest technology to develop new software, products, and services to meet your needs. The risks we've taken have paid off—in your satisfaction and in the honors that we've received along the way. Today's laurels often arrive in the form of your gratitude for the innovation that makes your job easier and sometimes in the form of recognition from unbiased judges—such as the awards we recently received. In June, NetClient™, our private, secure client portals, earned its second major award with *The CPA Technology Advisor's* first annual Tax and Accounting Technology Innovation Award. NetClient was one of only five products recognized. We also received the IRS Efiling Pioneer Award for processing the largest number of 1120 returns filed electronically.

While this recognition is gratifying, it isn't the reason we're in business. Rather, we strive to exceed our own expectations each day—so you can achieve and even surpass your goals. In that way, both your firm and our company are similar to athletes. As athletes extend themselves to achieve their personal best, we establish new targets and work toward them, often going beyond what we had imagined we could achieve. In this issue of *Solutions,* you'll read about firms that are using the advanced technology of our products and services in the best possible way—as their competitive advantage.

With new advances in technology made almost daily, this is no time for us to rest on our laurels. Instead, now is the time for us to think and dream, "What would happen if we…?" and work toward making those dreams a reality for you. In this celebration of our 25th year and of the 28th Olympiad, we pledge to continue in our mission of improving your productivity and profitability by using technology and knowledge to provide software and services that help you achieve your firm's "Olympic" goals.

Jonathan A. Baron
Executive Vice President, Accounting Market, Thomson Tax and Accounting
President and CEO, Thomson/Creative Solutions

FileCabinet Solution now available for clients!

Creative Solutions is pleased to announce that we now offer a special FileCabinet Solution license especially for clients. If your firm already owns a FileCabinet Solution software license, you now have the ability to register your clients to use the software also. The client version of FileCabinet Solution operates in a manner similar to the professional software you use. It enables your clients to electronically store all of their documents for maximum organization and efficiency—and to retrieve them in seconds for quick review or email. When your clients store their documents in a digital environment, it makes it even easier for you to exchange documents and information with them.

If your clients use Client Bookkeeping Solution (CBS) software, they can store and quickly access all of their daily transaction items, such as checks, statements, invoices, and reports in FileCabinet Solution without even leaving the CBS program.

With the client version of FileCabinet Solution, your clients can take advantage of all the time- and money-saving benefits of electronic document management—and you can enjoy the benefits of sharing electronic documents with your clients.

For information, contact your Account Representative at (800) 968-8900 or complete the enclosed reply card.

RIA Line Finder—your direct link to RIA tax research

RIA's Checkpoint® represents one of the exceptional resources offered through the Thomson Corporation. A leading authority on tax research, our sister Thomson company, RIA, provides the tax and accounting industry with the most comprehensive tax research and-content available. Driving our integration even deeper with research and tax compliance, Creative Solutions and RIA now offer a direct link between Checkpoint and our own leading tax preparation system, UltraTax.

As one of the most recent enhancements, the Direct Line Finder Research feature in UltraTax enables seamless integration between RIA's Checkpoint tax research system and UltraTax. Based on your location within the federal return, the unique Line Finder technology automatically directs you to the appropriate area within Checkpoint to support your research needs. During the busy tax season, this can prove to be an enormous time saver.

Linking to Checkpoint from within UltraTax is easy. From UltraTax 2004 (shipping November, 2004), you simply press Ctrl+F to view the form (including federal 1040, 1041, 1120 and 1065 returns). Then, use the menu or right click the mouse to link automatically to Checkpoint's content, where you can review the information required and, using a "single sign-on" technology, you bypass the usual access steps in Checkpoint.

For example, when working on a 1040 return, you can link to Checkpoint to review pension laws or information on education expenses. In a business return, you can link to Checkpoint to find the current thresholds for completing Schedules L and M. The integration between UltraTax and Checkpoint is another example of our commitment to provide software that helps to increase your productivity.

Most recent CBS release offers online banking and other enhancements

The most recent update to Client Bookkeeping Solution, shipped in early August, included a number of enhancements designed to increase your clients' efficiency and provide more advanced functionality.

Enhancements include the following:

- **Enhanced online banking**—Online bill payment and intra-bank fund transfers are now included in the online banking functionality for CBS.
- **Advanced multi-user feature**—Multiple users can now work simultaneously in the same CBS checkbook or module.
- **Improved printing capabilities**—Clients can now print labels for vendors and for customers (the Vendor List and Customer List).
  - Clients can now print vendor mailing labels in any standard 3 x 10 format using the payee name, vendor name, or contact name.
  - Clients can now print customer mailing labels in any standard 3 x 10 format for all customers, for all customers with open transactions, or for all customers with pending transactions.

To help users and their clients quickly learn the updates, Creative Solutions University, the training department of Creative Solutions, is offering a Client Bookkeeping Solution Version 2004.1 Update Seminar (see article, Page 5).

For more information about Client Bookkeeping Solution or this new training course, call (800) 968-8900 or complete the enclosed reply card.

Continued…

Web Employee…offering online pay information for your clients' employees

Recently, Creative Solutions launched Web Employee, a new online service that your clients can offer to their own employees to keep track of their pay records. Web Employee provides your clients' employees with individual intranet portals they can access from your website, where they can retrieve W-2s and check stubs, and verify their individual pay information. This service is being designed to expand the convenience of online services to your clients and their employees, and further strengthen the accountant-client relationship.

Available soon—impounding functionality for Payroll Solution

Available in late September, impounding functionality for Payroll Solution will provide an efficient means for you to hold funds from your clients' individual bank accounts in a central impound bank account that is under your firm's control. You will also be able to perform a bank reconciliation on the central impound account, handle payroll for your clients, and retain the payroll tax portion until taxes are actually due to take advantage of the float. The impounding functionality in Payroll Solution will be available electronically at no cost upon request to firms that have the Payroll Solution Direct Deposit module.

For more information on Impounding for Payroll Solution, contact your Account Representative at (800) 968-8900 or complete the enclosed reply card.

Planned product enhancements for 2004

The following are some of the major enhancements and changes for the 2004 tax season. If you would like to see the complete list of enhancements, including state changes, please visit our website: www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com. Click on Product Support and Services, and then click on References.

UltraTax

- **Easier Management of and Access to UltraTax Licensing Information**—To simplify the process of licensing your UltraTax software and make it more convenient, we will be moving to quick and easy electronic licensing, eliminating the need for license disks.
- **Condensed Client Organizer Option**—You will have the option to condense the 1040 individual Client Organizer down to as few as five pages rather than having to use a more lengthy version.
- **Web-based Client Organizer**—Now the web-based Client Organizer functionality will be included with the standard 1040 Client Organizer product, at no additional cost. (The 2003 price for the Web-based Client Organizer was $300.) The $1 post and $3 retrieval fees remain unchanged.

- **Direct RIA "Line Finder" Research Integration**—UltraTax seamlessly integrates with RIA's Checkpoint tax research system. The unique "line finder" technology automatically links you to the appropriate area within Checkpoint to support your research needs (see article, Page 3).

Write-Up Solution

- **Apha and Numeric Chracters**—The ability to use alpha characters and multiple separators in the chart of accounts mask
- **Enhanced Integration**—The addition of several features to enhance integration, including the ability to view FileCabinet Solution documents within CSA (as you can in UltraTax and CBS).

Payroll Compliance Solution

- **State-Specific W-2 Mag Media**—Support for state-specific W-2 magnetic filing media for *all* states
- **Additional Support**—Support for W-2C and orrected 1099s

Payroll Solution

- **Impounding Capability**—Support for impounding client funds and use of a central bank account for all clients and a bank reconciliation for the central impounding account. (See article on this page.)

NetClient

- **Document Presentation**—A "New" flag appears next to any file that has been uploaded to the document presentation module to help clients quickly identify newly posted files. Clients will be able to immediately identify new documents at a glance to enhance the workflow process. Once the client opens any new document, the flag automatically disappears.
- **Remote Payroll Entry**—The short form within the Remote Payroll Entry module has been extended to include additional important fields that make it a convenient way to enter data for large, complex payroll clients—particularly those with more than one department.
- **Templates**—Several new and professional portal templates will be added to NetClient's comprehensive library.

Creative Solutions is planning more enhancements for NetClient in 2004 and will announce them as they are available. For information on NetClient or these enhancements, please contact an Account Representative at (800) 968-8900 or complete the enclosed reply card.

TRAINING

Client Bookkeeping Solution: Train your staff and your CBS clients quickly with the CBS Version 2004.1 Update seminar

With the recent enhancements to Client Bookkeeping Solution (CBS), many users and their clients will be looking for a way to 'get up to speed' on the changes. Well, look no further than Creative Solutions University.

During this CBS 2004.1 update seminar, you and your clients can learn about the new enhancements, features, and user-interface changes for CBS version 2004.1. The class size will be limited to 20 students so that you can have the opportunity to ask questions. This lecture-style seminar will be presented in a web-based format.

Creative Solutions Practice: CSP Database Analysis Telephone Consulting helps your database work for you.

Users of Creative Solutions Practice (CSP) already rely on the software for the efficiency and profitability it brings to their firms. Now, CSP users have another way to increase efficiencies with CSP Database Analysis—our customized phone consulting.

Our new CSP Database Analysis is designed to help make your data work for you. After all, you already know the program, and you have all the data entered into the program. Our consult-ants can help you clean and refine your database and set it up so you can use it more effectively. This service offers your firm many benefits, including:
- Restructuring of your firm's database coding for consistency and maximum compatibility with CSP
- Analysis of your firm's billing processes and modifying invoice formats to allow you to bill in the most efficient manner
- Analysis of your firm's reports and recommendations for reports that would serve your firm's needs more effectively

We will work with you to achieve a streamlined setup that works best for your firm. Contact your Account Representative at (800) 968-8900 about CSP Database Analysis —and have your data and processes ready for the new year!

Web-based training: An ultra-convenient, and valuable way to learn your software quickly.

If you want to take advantage of training opportunities, but the courses aren't offered in a city near you and you don't want to travel, then web-based training is for you! With web-based training, you don't have to come to the classroom. Instead, the classroom comes to you! You learn in the comfort of your own office and on your own computer.

Web-based training courses, which are currently offered for all Creative Solutions product families, are in-depth, informative, and interactive. You can interact with both your peers and your instructor, and you'll have opportunities to work in the program that's being taught and to ask questions. And, web-based courses are less costly than some other training methods—so you'll save money, too!

For details about any of these courses, please contact a Creative Solutions Account Representative at (800) 968-8900 or visit www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com and click Training, or complete the enclosed reply card.

Creative Solutions University announces new courses

To help you make the most of your software investment, Creative Solutions University (CSU), the training and consulting department of Creative Solutions, is offering these new courses:

Client Bookkeeping Solution
- CBS version 2004.1 Update – Web-based Training for Accountants and Clients
- Accountant's Assistant® Import from Quickbooks® Pro – Web-Based Training

Creative Solutions Practice
- Advanced Skills – Regional Training
- Billing Skills – Web-based Training

Depreciation Solution
- Advanced Skills – Web-based Training

Engagement Solution
- Fundamental Skills – Regional Training

UltraTax:
- UltraTax Business Electronic Filing Fundamental Skills – TeleTraining
- UltraTax Transition Skills for ExacTax Package EX WIN Users – TeleTraining
- UltraTax Transition Skills for ExacTax DOS Users – TeleTraining

Web Services
- NetClient Fundamental Skills – Web-based Training
- NetStaff Fundamental Skills – Web-based Training
- Web Builder Solution Fundamental Skills – Web-based Training

General Creative Solutions Software
- Maximizing Creative Solutions Software Performance on Your Network

For more information about training options from CSU, visit www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com and click **Training**. Or call **(800) 968-8900** for more details.

Software integration from Creative Solutions means plenty to smile about at Bailin, Lavorato & Darling, Inc.

Having it all, with integrated software and paperless processing

No wonder Pam Darling is smiling. She lives in one of the most beautiful areas of the country, the Monterey Peninsula, otherwise known as "Steinbeck country." She's doing a job she loves, working with a variety of interesting clients. And she's comfortable in the knowledge that she has the right tools for the job—integrated software tools that make her and her associates more productive.

Pamela E. Darling, one of two principals with Bailin, Lavorato & Darling, Inc., Salinas, California, started with the firm 20 years ago. In 1984, she was working at a produce company in Salinas when Charles D. Bailin, a local accountant and former IRS agent, arrived to do the company's audit. She was asked to help him, and he was so impressed by her work that he hired her. After starting with the firm, she began taking accounting courses nights at San Jose State and became a CPA in 1988 and a firm principal in 1991.

Charles Bailin started the firm as a tax practice, but now the business is more diversified. "Taxes are only about half of our business," says Pam. "Write-up, business valuation, litigation support, consulting and other accounting services make up the balance. One of our specialties is handling the accounting for marital dissolutions."

Pam always enjoyed working with computers and has been involved with the firm's software from the beginning. "I've always liked technology," she says. "I've always wanted to get in there and see how things work and try them for myself. Not all accountants do, but I love it!" She's the "go-to" person for software, makes the purchase decisions, and likes to try out new software.

Pam Darling is excited about NetClient portal software. At the right is the brochure that she uses to promote it.

Growing with integrated software from Creative Solutions

The firm started with Creative Solutions DOS-based depreciation and tax software. In the 1990s, Bailin, Lavorato & Darling migrated to the world of Microsoft Windows® along with Creative Solutions. They were early adopters of UltraTax and FileCabinet Solution. With the recent purchase of Practice Solution, they now are using all of Creative Solutions' products.

The more Creative Solutions applications they added, the more they benefited from integration. "All of the programs work well as stand-alone software, but they work even better together. An immediate benefit of integration is that you don't have to spend time rekeying and reformatting data. Integration greatly reduces the amount of manual input. It saves a tremendous amount of time," says Pam,

"The greatest benefit of software integration is that it gives CPAs more time to do what they do best—consult with their clients."

who concludes, "The greatest benefit of software integration is that it gives CPAs more time to do what they do best—consult with their clients."

Pam says their firm has not directly tracked the impact on their realization rates with clients, but she's emphatic about the best measure of all: "Integration has made it possible for us to reduce our staffing through attrition while increasing our client base and the services we provide."

Moving toward paperless processing

The benefits of integration have been compounding since they became one of the first users of FileCabinet Solution (FCS) and started the process of paperless integration.

"Talk about neat software!" says Pam. "FileCabinet Solution just becomes more useful as time goes by. We've been using it for five years, and it is proving to be more and more valuable. It's great to be able to email right from FCS. It's great not having to tear around the office looking for a missing file folder. It saves time and energy all around." But that's not all.

The benefits are cumulative—the more data that is entered into FCS, the more useful it becomes in the everyday workflow of the practice. According to Pam, they began with a phased approach that started with UltraTax returns. They saved only the returns for several years, creating an electronic archive. Last year, they started to input both the tax returns and the supporting documents. Now they are in the process of beginning what she calls "phase two," bringing everything else into the system, from write-up to general ledger and supporting documents.

"Our goal is to go completely paperless, and we expect it will take us several years to accomplish that. But already the system is paying real productivity dividends. It's a wonderful system."

It works for us, and we don't expect to outgrow it in the foreseeable future."

Real software for real people

While Pam enjoys tinkering with computers and software, she appreciates that not everyone does. What she values about Creative Solutions is that it provides robust, well supported software with a variety of training options suited to their customers' needs.

"With simpler software, we usually just figure it out for ourselves. With anything more complicated, we'll usually send one or two people to CSI's regional training classes, and then they'll come back and train other people."

From the beginning, she has valued Creative Solutions' product support. "It's one of the reasons we have stayed with Creative Solutions. Support was great in the early years, when they were smaller, and we got to know the people we were talking to. They're bigger now, but they're still there for us."

Toward the electronic future

The same technology that has made it possible for small and mid-size accounting firms to compete on a level playing field with much larger firms is also raising the threshold of their clients' expectations. The future belongs to firms that use technology to make their clients' lives easier.

Bailin, Lavorato & Darling has been moving along this road since they first started getting their clients involved with Checkbook Solution (DOS), and they've kept pace by offering them Client Bookkeeping

Historic Client
Pam is a fan of the books of Salinas native John Steinbeck. One of her favorite clients is Steinbeck House, a restaurant and museum in the author's restored Salinas birthplace—and a user of Client Bookkeeping Solution (CBS). When she and some friends formed an investment club, they named it Timshel, *after the central theme of* East of Eden—*which resulted in an invitation to Oprah's taping of her show about the book at the Steinbeck House.*

Solution so they can spend less time on accounting and more time running their businesses. Clients appreciate the easy-to-use software. Being able to email them returns and supporting documents directly from FCS adds another level of functionality.

CBS is one of the prime examples of how the firm uses technology to get new clients. "CBS is always a selling point," says Pam. "It's great. It's a way to help our clients get their feet wet with computers and to make sure their books are set up right, instead of their trying to do it all themselves with generic accounting software. Many clients just don't know enough about accounting to use those packages well. They appreciate having an accountant as part of the process."

Currently, about 50% of the firm's write-up clients use CBS. Making it possible for clients to do their bookkeeping online via a NetClient portal is the logical next step. Pam is enthusiastic about the potential of NetClient and looks forward to the time when many of their clients will be using it. "It takes care of the problem of keeping all our clients' CBS software updated with the latest version. And it's great to be able to go right into our clients' software to be able to help them with a problem."

"The clients who use NetClient love it," she says. "We're trying to move as many clients in that direction as we can. Our staff has been instructed to actively promote it with all clients as they get high-speed Internet connections."

WEB BUILDER SOLUTION

Using your website to enhance client service

"At Tenney Bailey & Associates, we have distinguished ourselves by providing the practical business advice that helps our clients reach their full potential."

These words appear on the website of one of the profession's most progressive accounting firms—Tenney Bailey & Associates, LLC CPAs (TB&A), Marrietta, Ohio. The staff at TB&A is committed to serving their clients the best they can, and to do this, convenience and accessibility are key. This is why the firm of TB&A has invested the time building a powerful web presence… one that offers clients ultimate convenience via an array of helpful tools.

The firm of TB&A offers a fully functional and highly professional website, complete with several integrated features designed for client use. Personal, private client portals offer clients secure access to their financial information on an anytime-anywhere basis. Clients simply visit the firm's website, log in to their private portal and view or print the documents needed—whenever and from wherever they have an Internet connection.

In addition, an array of helpful online tools assist clients in a variety of ways. TB&A's site offers ten financial calculators, including mortgage loan, refinance breakeven, Social Security benefits, and college savings to help clients

www.tbacpa.com

quickly calculate complex financial scenarios. Other options available through the site include a Links page, complete with links to government sites, financial and business news sites, and leading search engines, and a Newsletter page that offers informative and timely articles of interest.

Online convenience means happier, more profitable clients

Root and Associates, an Indiana-based CPA firm, has also jumped on the technology bandwagon to offer their clients a strong online resource for accessing information and helpful tools. The firm of Root and Associates also offers portal accessibility to their clients, allowing the firm

www.rootandassociates.com

to serve their clients no matter where they are located or what time they require information. For example, clients no longer need to call the accountant and request faxes of financial information to complete a mortgage application. All they need to do is log in to their portal and print what they need, immediately. Best of all, the level of convenience offered only works to strengthen the client-accountant bond.

Other options available through the firm's site include a Links page, ten financial calculators, and a small library of current, industry-relevant articles and newsletters.

"We are more profitable and our clients are happier because of the added convenience our website provides them," says Darren Root.

In today's Internet-driven society, clients are beginning to expect anytime-anywhere convenience and online resources from their business advisors. These are just two firms that have created a strong web presence that's of value to their clients, and by doing so, have placed themselves among the ranks of even the largest financial institutions.

ELECTRONIC FILING—PAYROLL

E-filing ATF payroll returns for maximum efficiency

Overview of 940/941 Electronic Filing

If you'd like to take advantage of the efficiencies provided by 940/941 Electronic Filing for your clients, you can choose from two methods. The first involves obtaining a separate personal identification number (PIN) for each client and filing with that PIN as the signature. The second involves becoming a reporting agent, which allows your firm to file multiple returns using a single PIN. Creative Solutions Accounting products support both methods of filing on an ad hoc basis. You can decide to file returns for all your clients by one of the two methods exclusively, or select the appropriate method on a client-by-client basis. Of course, paper filing will remain available for everyone. The following sections offer details on each method.

Method 1: E-filing as an Electronic Return Originator (ERO) Using Individual Client PINs

To file 940/941 returns electronically with client-specific PINs, you need to become an Electronic Return Originator (ERO). This means filing Form 8633 with the IRS to get an EFIN. To access this form online, visit the IRS website at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/f8633.pdf (Note: If you already have a valid EFIN for 1040 filing, you must still file a new Form 8633, and be sure to mark the 940 and 941 checkboxes as well as the checkboxes for any other forms you will be filing.)

The next step is enrolling clients in the program to receive PINs. This process is done electronically using the ELF E-file Enrollment function in the Payroll Compliance Solution module for Write-Up Solution or Payroll Solution. Once you transmit the enrollment, your client should receive a PIN from the IRS within two weeks. The client must then provide you with the PIN for filing. The client PIN is equivalent to the signature of an individual at the client firm. For example, if the enrollment is made for a particular employee of the client company, the PIN received from that enrollment is the equivalent of that employee actually signing the return.

Step-by-step instructions for completing electronic filing using this method are found in online help. In the Help menu, select CSA Help Topics. Choose the Index tab and search on 941: e-filing 940/941 using individual client PINs.

Method 2: E-filing as a Reporting Agent

In order to use this method, you must register with the IRS as a reporting agent by indicating this intent on Form 8633. You must also file Form 8655 from each client for whom you will be acting as a reporting agent. Reporting agent registration may take up to two months to process, so if you are interested in becoming a reporting agent, we encourage you to allow for the potential time delay when initiating the process. To access the necessary forms online, point your browser to the following locations:

- **Form 8633**: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/f8633.pdf
- **Form 8655**: www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/f8655.pdf.

When you act as a Reporting Agent, a representative of your firm receives a PIN that can be used to file multiple returns. Once the reporting agent PIN is entered into CSA, it is saved so that any client can then be configured to use it for 940 and 941 e-filing. Again, the reporting agent PIN is a signature and, in this case, carries the same liability as signing the return on behalf of the client. Please refer to the IRS's guidelines regarding the usage and storage of personal identification numbers.

Step-by-step instructions for completing electronic filing using Method 2 are found in online help. In the Help menu, select CSA Help Topics. Choose the Index tab and search on 941: e-filing 940-941 as a reporting agent.

IMPORTING QUICKBOOKS® DATA

Importing data from QuickBooks® Pro into Write-Up Solution

If you have the Client Bookkeeping Solution (CBS) Master License, not only can you seamlessly integrate your CBS client data with Write-Up Solution, you also have the ability to import client data from QuickBooks Pro and other general ledger software packages your clients may be using. The Accountant's Assistant module, which is included with your CBS Master License, works directly with your Write-Up Solution software to facilitate this data import.

The QuickBooks Pro Import capabilities available via the Accountant's Assistant module provide a one-way transfer of your clients' data into Write-Up Solution. The following client data can be imported:
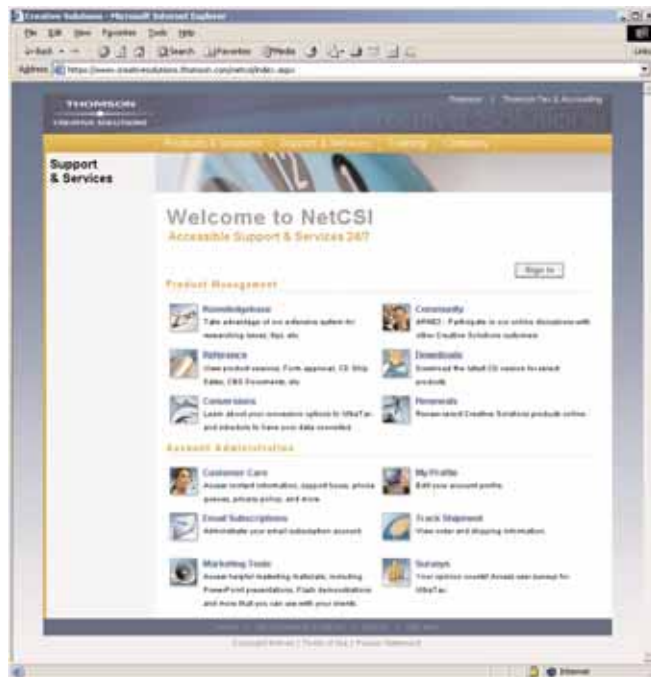
- **All transactions for a user-specified period** (including year-to-date transactions), such as checks, deposits, payroll checks, invoices, bills, payments, transfers, and journal entries.
- **General ledger information**, including account number, name, accumulated balances, and account balances (not including transaction detail).
- **Vendor information**, including general information and accumulated balances based on transactions that are being imported.
- **Employee information**, including general information and accumulated balances based on the payroll checks that are being imported.

Accountant's Assistant supports data transfer from QuickBooks Pro 6, 99, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2004, and QuickBooks Enterprise Edition.

SERVICE AND SUPPORT

NetCSI is at your service to provide round-the-clock service and support

With customers across the country, working in different time zones, Creative Solutions realizes that our customers require expanded service and convenience. In response, we developed and launched NetCSI on our website this past spring. NetCSI is a section of our website accessible only to users of CSI products and services. It is our 24/7 online sup-

port and service center that makes it easier for users to locate needed information—including instant answers to questions about accounts, products, and services—at any time of the day or night. With NetCSI, you enjoy:

- **Email Subscriptions** — Sign up to receive immediate notices about product updates and other product and service information by email.
- **Knowledgebase** — Find answers to product support questions by searching our support database and reading our Frequently Asked Questions.
- **ARNE2** — Participate in our free online forum with other Creative Solutions users throughout the country, and discuss any topic from your CSI software to practice management and tax law issues.
- **Reference Information** — Check the version status of CSI products and timing of UltraTax product releases during tax season, as well as planned product enhancements user bulletins.

- **Surveys** — Give us your opinions on and suggestions for our products online.
- **Downloads** — Download the latest CD version of Creative Solutions products.
- **Renewals** — Renew Creative Solutions products online.
- **Marketing Tools** — Access creative, informative marketing aids to use with your clients such as animated demos and editable PowerPoint® presentations.
- **Track Shipment** — View your product order information.

NetCSI was also designed to be highly intuitive. Logging in to NetCSI is as easy as visiting our website at www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com, clicking Support & Services (in the top navigation bar), and then clicking the Sign In button. If you've used NetCSI before, you'll only need your email address and password to sign in. If you're a new NetCSI user, you will need to have your Firm ID number and zip code on hand to log in for the first time.

Log in at any time…day or night. Remember, NetCSI is at your service.

TRANSITION

Welcome ExacTax customers!

In April, Creative Solutions announced our purchase of selected assets of the ExacTax Package EX software line. We are very excited to welcome ExacTax customers to the Creative Solutions family and hope that you are well on your way to a successful transition to UltraTax. To assist with your UltraTax evaluation and transition, we've included helpful information especially for ExacTax users on our website, including letters from Creative Solutions and ExacTax, an ExacTax to UltraTax Transition Guide, and more. To access this information, please visit: www.creativesolutions.thomson.com/ExacTax.

We are also offering a specialized ExacTax to UltraTax TeleTraining class that began July 19. The first two people registered from your firm can attend this class for free. There is a $50 per person charge after two registrants. This comprehensive three-hour class is designed to ensure that you have all the information you need to help you get up and running with your new software well before tax season. Please view our website for the latest training schedule information and availability.

If you have not made your data conversion appointment yet, please do so by calling (800) 968-0600, pressing 3, and then pressing 1 three times. Allow yourself plenty of time to review your converted data prior to tax season.

If there's anything we can do to assist you with your evaluation of UltraTax, please contact an ExacTax to UltraTax Transition Specialist at (800) 968-8900.

PRODUCT SUPPORT

Support contracts can offer a cost-effective alternative

To help users increase productivity and profitability, Creative Solutions provides product support to answer specific questions and issues that arise regarding the operation of your Creative Solutions software. Depending on individual circumstances, the cost for usage hours can fluctuate. To help users control this variable, Creative Solutions offers support contracts.

When you purchase a support contract, a consistent monthly fee is charged for technical support, no matter how much support time is utilized. Therefore, the support invoice is the same every month, allowing for more effective budgeting and eliminating guesswork or surprises. In addition to cost control, a support contract also provides a level of comfort for staff members because they can call for assistance without worrying about the cost. Users get to the right answer—right away—without wasting time trying to tackle questions that can be quickly answered by a Product Support Representative. A support contract also eliminates the ongoing quandary over billable costs. Because of the recurring monthly invoice, it's a simple process to divide the expense and make allocations to clients.

Reasonably priced and measurably beneficial, Creative Solutions support contracts offer users improvements in productivity and profitability. For more information about support contracts, call Customer Service at (800) 968-0600 or complete the enclosed reply card.

TRAINING OPTIONS

New classes and discounts

Two Ways to Save on Training!

Creative Solutions University (CSU), the training department of Creative Solutions, is offering two ways to save on training for your Creative Solutions products:

1. Multiple Firm Member Discount—Register two or more staff members for the same course at the same location and take advantage of these discounts:
• 2nd enrollment—10% off
• 3rd enrollment—15% off
• 4th + enrollment—20% off
This discount applies to Classroom (Regional) Training, TeleTraining, and Web-based Training.

2. Write-Up Solution Discount—Register the same student for more than one Write-Up Solution training course and save! Classes include:
• Introduction to General Ledger and Payroll Compliance Skills
• Financial Statement Formatting Skills
• General Ledger Advanced Skills

The Write-Up Solution discount applies to the three courses listed, which you can take either in the classroom or via the web.

To learn more about these discounts, visit www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com and click Training. Once you're there, click the "See our Discounts" link in the upper right corner. Or call **(800) 968-8900** for more details.

INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Email subscriptions keep your products up-to-the-minute!

If you'd like to be informed the moment updates to your software are available for downloading and if you'd like to learn about new training options, discounts, or special offers on Creative Solutions products and services, then you'll want to consider participating in our email subscription service. With email subscriptions, the news that you want is delivered to you in a timely manner—so you always have the latest information at your fingertips.

You can sign up to receive emails about:
• **Updates** – We'll send notification when an update to your software is available for download so you can take advantage of advanced capabilities the moment they're available.
• **Product and industry information**—Learn about new functionality for the products you use—and how those new functions affect your processes. *UltraTax Newsbeat* is published biweekly to UltraTax users, to inform them of product shortcuts, tax law updates and other information.
• **Promotions** – We'll notify you about special discounts on products or services you may have been considering and advise you about new training and consulting opportunities.

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There is no cost for email subscriptions, and when you sign up for email from Creative Solutions, your email information stays confidential, and you may unsubscribe at any time.

UltraTax Conversion

Virginia accountant finds easy transition and smooth learning curve in converting his tax preparation software from ProSystem® fx to Creative Solutions' UltraTax.

Making the move to UltraTax

To date, more than 850 users of Pro System *fx* from CCH have switched to UltraTax. One of them is Allan M. Berger, CPA, who has been a sole practitioner in Newport News, Virginia since 1984.

"I have kind of a boutique practice," he says of his diversified portfolio of high net worth clients. He does about 100 complex tax returns a year, many involving multiple partnerships. His clients include attorneys, real estate investors and other professionals. Since many of his clients are involved in partnerships, and he prepares both the business returns and the 1040s for the individual partners, his accounting software needs are in large part driven by the requirements of serving these clients.

A long-time user of ProSystem *fx*, Allan made the switch to Creative Solutions' UltraTax for the 2003 tax year. Changing software for a major business application is not a step to be taken lightly—and for many accountants, no application is more important than their tax software. He was relieved to find that the transition was easier than he expected and that the learning curve was quite manageable. And he's delighted with the increased functionality of UltraTax, especially the data-sharing capability.

Getting started

Allan was able to start getting acquainted with the features of UltraTax by using a trial version to handle extensions for the 2002 tax year.

He wasn't exactly a stranger to Creative Solutions software. "I've been using Depreciation Solution for 15 years, first in the DOS version. And, of course, the Windows version is terrific. That's another feature that integrates beautifully with UltraTax."

"Some of my clients have 800 to 1,000 different assets that need to be depreciated. I like the way that in Depreciation Solution all depreciation flows through by client ID, not tax ID.

Smooth conversion

When it came time to transfer his data from ProSystem *fx,* Allan was pleased with the conversion features of UltraTax. "Demographic data converted very well. My returns involve a lot of rental property, and the data generally carried over. There were occasional differences in the size of fields, such as partnership names, and of course, it's only prudent to check, but overall I was very pleased with how easy it was to get set up. Help and technical support were always there when I needed them, which wasn't very often."

Using UltraTax in his practice

"One reason I stayed with ProSystem *fx* so long is that I have a large number of partnerships and LLCs as clients and I also do the 1040s for the individual partners," notes Allan. "I was pleased to find how comprehensive UltraTax was, along with its intuitive design and advanced data sharing. The data sharing was especially important when initially doing the partnership return and then subsequently doing the 1040 returns for the partners. UltraTax's data-sharing feature automatically senses when the 1040 program is loaded, where that person's tax ID appears throughout the partnership returns. Then it automatically brings in the partnership data that needs to go into the individual returns."

Some of his clients are involved in as many as 20 partnerships. "It's remarkable," he says. "Instead of getting all those K1s and entering the data manually, it's all right there in the 1040 returns. And it's dead-on accurate."

He sees other benefits as well. "It's a well-designed, smooth program that runs well on my computer. It's very stable. And the Tax Organizer really made a big difference in 2003. My clients love it!"

> **"It's a well-designed, smooth program that runs well on my computer. It's very stable. And the Tax Organizer really made a big difference in 2003. My clients loved it!"**
>
> *— Allan Berger*

ULTRATAX

Q. How do I amend the federal and state returns?

A. UltraTax 1040 includes a quick way to populate Screen Amend in the General folder with the information reported originally. To amend the federal return, click the General folder, and then click the Amend tab; mark the "Transfer Original Information" checkbox and press ENTER. The fields on Screen Amend will populate with the information originally reported for 2003. To amend a state return, click the state button in the folders block, and then click the General folder; click the Amend tab and mark the Transfer Original Information" checkbox and press ENTER. The fields on the state Amend tab will populate in the same manner as the federal return. You can then make the changes for the amendment to the federal and state returns to fill out the 1040X and the appropriate state amendment forms correctly.

Q. Can I preview the invoice without previewing the whole return?

A. Yes. To do so, right-click on any input screen or form and select the Preview Invoice command from the shortcut menu. UltraTax will display a preview of just the invoice for the current client.

WRITE-UP SOLUTION

Q. When I make adjustments to checks during bank reconciliation, those changes automatically show up in the Transactions window—but with a single reference. Is there a way to make each such reference match the check number instead?

A. Yes. From the Bank Reconciliation window, choose Edit / Options and select the option called Use check number as the transaction reference for adjustments to checks.

Q. When I print or preview my financial statement, the last line of the header doesn't show. How can I fix this?

A. This problem is normally caused by the body of the statement overlapping the header, but the Financial Statement Editor allows great flexibility on margin and header size so the problem is easy to correct. Simply adjust the statement header and top margins to allow more room for the header text. Open the statement in the Financial Statement Editor, choose File / Properties, and increase the size of both the top margin and header margin as needed. (The header and top margins both measure from the top edge of the paper, so it's important that you use them together to obtain the desired spacing.)

Write-Up Solution's Financial Statement Editor provides extensive flexibility in modifying financial statement formats.
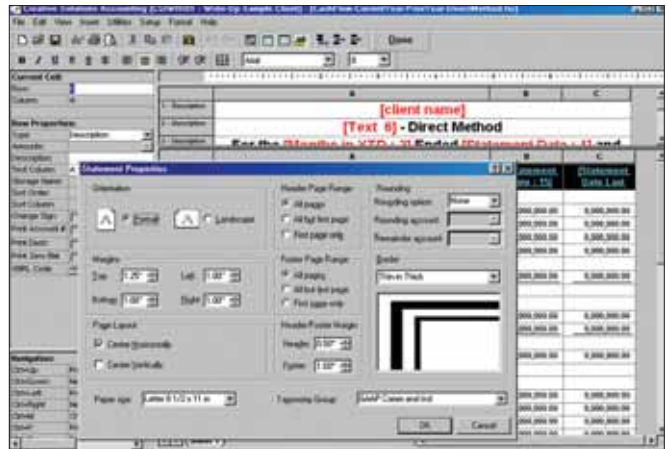
PAYROLL SOLUTION (PRS)

Q. I have a payroll client with some employees that are paid bi-weekly and some that are paid weekly. Is there a way for me to set up the client in PRS so I can see just the names of the employees with one payroll frequency or the other during payroll check entry?

A. Yes. If you first set up a separate calculation profile for each group, you can "focus" the employees available for selection during payroll check entry to include just one group of employees by selecting the appropriate calculation profile. In the Setup / Calculation Profiles dialog, click the Add button, enter a description for the first profile (Bi-Weekly Payroll), specify the frequency (Bi-Weekly), and then click the Enter button. Define another calculation profile for weekly payroll, click the Enter button, and then click the Done button. When you're ready to enter payroll checks in the Tasks / Payroll Check Entry window, choose Edit / Options and select the desired calculation profile for the current data-entry session. For more information about using calculation profiles, search on "Setting up: calculation profiles for a PRS client" from the Index tab of the CSA Help Topics dialog.

Q. I've set up several employee templates for one PRS client and now I want to use those same templates for another client. Is there a way I can transfer the employee templates from one client to another?

A. Yes. Open the client to which you want to transfer the employee templates. Choose Utilities / Transfer Client Information, select the client to transfer templates from, mark the checkbox for employee templates, and click the Transfer button. Note that you can also transfer other client information, such as departments or vendors.

ENGAGEMENT SOLUTION

Q. I've made some changes to the administration setup for the Engagement Solution software installed on our firm's network. How can I get those changes to be reflected in the version of the program installed on my laptop?

A. After the administration changes have been made on the network, you need to provide a global backup file for each laptop user to restore. To do this, choose File / Backup / System Data, double-click both the WSW.SYS and CSA.SYS files to select them, and then click the Backup button. To restore the files on a laptop, open the program on the laptop, choose File / Restore / System Data, select both files, and click the Restore button.

Q. How can I add a new engagement for a selected client?

A. There are three ways to add a new engagement to your client: (1) create from an existing engagement; (2) create a blank engagement; or (3) create from PPC's e-Practice Aids.™ This last option is available only for licensed users of PPC's Office-Based Practice Aids. For more information on these aids, please contact PPC at (800) 323-8724.

Q. How do I add documents from the PPC online library?

A. To see the command to bring in documents from the PPC online library, you need to have the PPC version 03-12 or higher CD installed locally on each machine accessing the online titles.

TRIAL BALANCE SOLUTION (TBS)

Q. Can I create my financial statements using the adjusted budget balance?

A. Yes. The adjusted budget balance may be used on financial statements by selecting AB (Adjusted Budget) from the Amount type field in the Cell Properties box. This could be helpful if you need to comply with GASB 34 requirements.

Q. While reviewing client data in the Trial Balance grid, I noticed that an entry I deleted earlier still appears in the grid. How can I correct this?

A. After making changes to the posted journal entries, you can ensure that the effects of those changes update the client data by reposting the entries. From the Adjusting Journal

Entries window, choose Edit / Post Adjusting Journal Entries — or simply press the F5 key on your keyboard. This will repost all journal entries and update the grid display appropriately.

## CLIENT BOOKKEEPING SOLUTION (CBS)

Q. Is there a way to print customer or vendor labels from CBS?

A. Yes. In CBS version 2004.1.2 or higher, both the Vendor List report (in CBS CheckWriter and CBS Accounts Payable) and the Customer List report (in CBS Accounts Receivable) include an option to print labels in standard 3x10 format.

Q. How can I set up a CheckWriter transaction (check, deposit or other item, journal entry) to be created automatically each month?

A. Using CBS version 2004.1.2 or higher, you can set up any type of CheckWriter transaction as a recurring memorized transaction by choosing Setup / Memorized Transactions.

Client Bookkeeping Solution's Memorized Transaction window for creating recurring transactions.
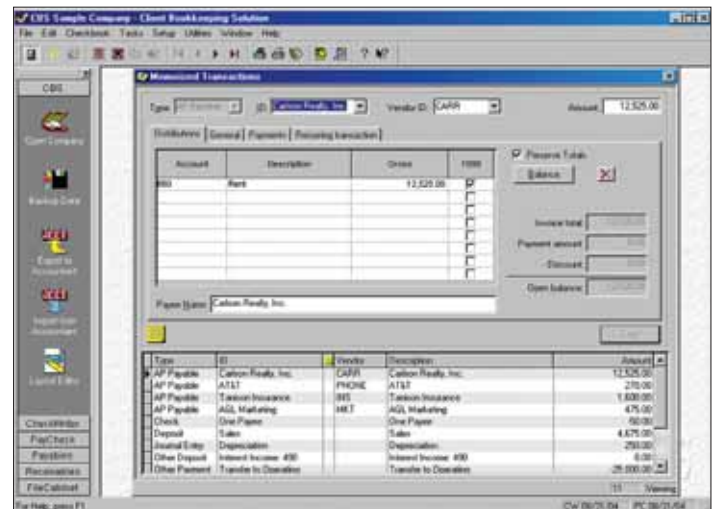
Q. Is there any way to record electronic payments in CBS?

A. Yes. With CBS version 2004.1.2 or higher, both the CBS CheckWriter and the CBS Accounts Payable modules enable you to specify an EFT (electronic funds transfer) type of payment.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS PRACTICE (CSP)

Q. Is there a way to create a note or memo that will show up when I bill a client?

A. Yes. You can enter a billing note on the Billing/Memo tab of the Client master file. This feature (available in version 2004.1.1) gives you the ability to create an internal note that is automatically displayed when you detail bill the client.

Q. Can I populate FileCabinet Solution with my CSP clients?

A. Yes. The option to send your CSP clients to FileCabinet Solution is available on the FileCabinet tab of the Help / Repair dialog in CSP. You can populate FileCabinet Solution with folders for your clients and staff using your designated data path for FileCabinet Solution. (We recommend that you use separate data paths in FileCabinet Solution for clients and staff.)

FILECABINET SOLUTION

Q. I have data for the same client stored in two different locations. Can I combine this information?

A. Yes, you can merge the data for the client. First, you need to make a backup of the data from one of the locations. Next, choose File / Restore and select the backup you just created. To merge data from drawers with identical names, mark the Merge with Existing Drawers option. To merge data from drawers with different names, mark the Merge with Single Drawer option. Click the Merge button to complete the procedure.

Q. I'm just starting to use FileCabinet Solution. What is the average drawer size per client?

A. File sizes can vary widely in FileCabinet Solution, depending on how much data, how many scanned images you choose to store for any client, and what resolution you select, so it's difficult to determine an "average" file size per client. However, it's typical for documents printed to FileCabinet Solution to average about 10 KB per page and for scanned images to average about 25 KB per image.

WEB SERVICES

Q. How can I delete Document Presentation or Remote Payroll information from a NetClient portal?

A. Log in to NetStaff as the administrator, click the Utilities tab, and click the Cleanup Navigation link. The Cleanup page enables you to delete the Remote Payroll

clients or Document Presentation files completely so you can remove these files without deleting other NetClient information. You can also choose to delete the entire Document Presentation client.

Q. Can my clients print a data-entry report from within Remote Payroll Entry?

A. Yes. To create the Printable Report, a NetClient user must log in to NetClient, click the appropriate link in the Remote Payroll Entry module, and then click the Printable Report Options link. Under the Printable Report Options heading, mark the desired checkboxes, and then click the Update button. (Note that the Printable Report contains an option to hide zero amounts, which results in a report that is similar to a data-entry worksheet.) Click the View Printable Report link to open the report in a separate window.

NetClient's Remote Payroll enables clients to print reports from within data entry.

Perfect Attendance!

Among the things Creative Solutions has become known for in our 25 years of service is the highly successful Annual Users' Conference. Many of our users attend frequently, and some have had perfect attendance from the beginning.

Stephen L. Bruckman of New York and Erik H. Petersen of Florida are two users who have attended every users' conference that we've held since the first one in 1980—when, according to Bruckman, "there were 22 of us sitting around a table" for the conference.

Both Bruckman and Petersen agreed that the Users' Conference offers excellent educational opportunities—and that they learn something every time. "The conferences I have attended have been the most comprehensive and best conducted of any I have been to. What better way to get CPE credits!" commented Petersen.

"I've made a number of friends and acquaintances throughout the years—and I've also been able to help clients with the contacts I've made," stated Bruckman.

Finally, both Petersen and Bruckman appreciate the travel opportunities that the conference provides. Bruckman fondly recalls the conference in Orlando in 1985 and being able to watch the space shuttle Challenger on its last launch (prior to its fateful lift-off in 1986). Petersen remembers attending the San Francisco conference right after a serious earthquake, and visiting other places such as Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Las Vegas. He also recalls "being greeted so warmly year after year by the staff and by others who have had the good fortune to have a long association with Creative Solutions."

Join Us in San Antonio!

Our 2004 Users' Conference takes place at the San Antonio Marriott Rivercenter, November 10 – 13, on the unique River Walk in beautiful San Antonio, Texas.

The Creative Solutions Users' Conference is the longest-running, best-attended conference of its kind. Attendees have the chance to network in a non-competitive environment with colleagues from across the country. And they return from the conference with dozens of practical ideas they can usually put to work immediately in their firms and contacts that many of them keep for a lifetime.

Be sure to mark your calendar—this year's conference has a lot to offer, including:

- More than 60 Powerful Workshops on a Wide Variety of Topics
- Updates on Creative Solutions' Latest Technology Offerings
- The Opportunity to Speak with Leading Experts in the Profession
- 20 CPE Credits

For more information, please visit our website at **www.CreativeSolutions.Thomson.com** and click the **Users' Conference** link in the upper-left corner or call Customer Service at (800) 968-0600.

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request for *i*nformation

Please provide me with more information on (check all that apply):

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○ Write-Up Solution
○ Trial Balance Solution
○ Engagement Solution
○ Payroll Solution

Client Accounting
○ Client Bookkeeping Solution

Tax & Depreciation
○ UltraTax
○ UltraTax Planner
○ Depreciation Solution

Document Management
○ FileCabinet Solution
○ FileCabinet Solution for Clients

Practice Management
○ Practice Solution
○ Scheduling Solution

Web Services
○ NetClient Private Portals
○ NetStaff Portals
○ Web Builder Solution
○ Virtual Office

Training & Consulting
○ CBS Update Training for
   Accountants and Clients
○ Web-based Training
○ CSP Database Analysis
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Other
○ Product Support Contracts
○ 2004 Users' Conference
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